

WRTG 1250-880
Professor Bruce Bassoff
Part I: Through First Week

The human understanding when it has once adopted an opinion draws all things else to support and agree with it. And though there be a greater number and weight of instances to be found on the other side, yet these it either neglects and despises, or else by some distinction sets aside and rejects, in order that by this great and pernicious predetermination the authority of its former conclusion may remain inviolate.

Francis Bacon

WEB PAGES: Each web page has a hyperlink at the top that allows you to access a pdf file you can print. You cannot print directly from the web pages. The website also has a **Blog**, a menu item for which appears (somewhat pale) at the top of the home page, along with the syllabi. Please check the blog each day, even though it's unlikely that I will have something to say that often. If you miss something on the blog—a new assignment, for example—it is your responsibility. It doesn't take long to check.

OFFICE HOURS: after class each day and by appointment for those who cannot make that time. I want to meet with everyone at least once during the semester, so I have set aside the following class periods for individual conferences: Wednesday, October 6; Monday, October 25; Friday, November 12; Wednesday, November 17; and Monday, November 29. Please sign up for one of those class periods so that no more than three people will be scheduled for each one.

EVERYONE'S READING LIST: *Knowing Words: A Guide to First-Year Writing and Rhetoric* (current edition); Diana Hacker, *Rules for Writers* (sixth edition); and William Shakespeare, *Julius Caesar* (the Yale University Press edition). If you use a different edition, you may have trouble following class discussion because line numbers will differ from edition to edition. Other readings are included on this website.

Please bring *Rules for Writers* to every class because we never know when some issue of organization, development, sentence structure, or punctuation may come up. The book isn't that big, so the nuisance shouldn't be that great.

COURSE OBJECTIVES: In accordance with the criteria set out by the Colorado Commission on Higher Education, this course will teach you

- *how to do research and to analyze and critique other people's ideas
- how to synthesize those ideas with your own
- how to write in various situations for various audiences
- how to write clearly, grammatically, and efficiently
- how to understand the topoi—the social and psychological commonplaces—that inform your sense of reality or that of others
- how to understand the ways in which people in various media try to persuade you of something more or less real, more or less fantastic

- and how to understand yourself by understanding whom or what you identify with.

In your previous schooling some of you have been told, explicitly or implicitly, that grammar and punctuation aren't important. I passionately dispute that idea and will continue to dispute it throughout the course. Lewis Carroll (of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* fame) had fun with the idea that punctuation was trivial. Here is some verse from his book of "frivolities":

Every lady in this land
Has twenty nails on each hand
Five and twenty on hands and feet
This is true without deceit.

The nonsense is remedied by punctuation:

Every lady in this land
Has twenty nails. On each hand
Five, and twenty on hands and feet.
This is true without deceit.

Please read the mini-essay "Reading, Writing, and Rhetoric" on the course website, which explains the importance of understanding rhetoric if one wants to live consciously and freely.

LIBRARY TUTORIALS: To help you learn how to do research, you will complete four library tutorials, each of which acquaints you with the resources of the library. Done outside the classroom on your own time, they can be accessed on-line at <http://ucblibraries.colorado.edu/pwr/tutorial/home.htm>. If you have problems logging in for a tutorial, contact pwrhelp@colorado.edu and provide your name, identity key, and course number.

The library also provides "Reading Themes," full text articles you can use to support your own research, at <http://ucblibraries.colorado.edu/pwr/themes/themes.htm>.

GRADING: Your first essay will be commented on but not graded. After that, you will have three graded assignments: a two paragraph assignment on Bill O'Reilly, an essay on *Julius Caesar*, and a longer research essay. The Bill O'Reilly assignment will constitute 1/6 (2/12) of your cumulative grade, the essay on *Julius Caesar* 1/3 (4/12), and the research essay 1/2 (6/12).

You will also be doing many exercises to strengthen your basic skills. Exceptionally good or poor work on these exercises may affect your final grade, so do them carefully and feel free to consult with classmates. In addition, I may ask anyone who is struggling to do supplemental work or get help at the writing center. Please don't take such a request as an insult. It isn't.

The course, moreover, is paced so deliberately, with so many opportunities for feedback and revision, that the only way you can get a mediocre or poor grade is by goofing off or not using

your time judiciously. You are all honors students, so I assume that you demand a great deal of yourselves.

Your papers will be evaluated for ideas, of course, but also for their logical development. Ask yourselves why anyone should believe or even care about your assertions if you don't support them with strong logic and relevant particulars. Do your paragraphs form a well-organized whole, with thesis statement, topic sentences, and transitions making your logic clear? and is each paragraph unified and coherent? What about syntax? Is your writing choppy and monotonous or fluent and varied? Do your sentences emphasize what needs to be emphasized? Is your word choice clear and accurate or obscure and careless? Do you use jargon or clichés? Does your punctuation help or hinder? For your research paper, how well do you follow the MLA form we will be using in this course? How easy is it for people to check your research or pursue ideas further?

For all assignments, please conform to the following guidelines:

- **that papers are typed and doubled spaced on one side only**
- **that they use a 12 point standard text font like times, palatino, or arial**
- **that their pages, except the first, are numbered, with margins set to 1" all around**
- **that they include name, course, professor's name, date, and title**
- **and that they are stapled (no kiddie-style tearing and twisting of corners)**

Because this class centers around group work—the workshopping process—both absence and lateness are a big deal. So are all assignments, even small ones, since they form the basis of your group work. If you are absent, late, or lacking a completed assignment, your lapse affects your group also. Consequently, I have created a category called a Lapse, and each Lapse results in your final grade being lowered by half a grade (A to A-, for example).

WHAT IS A LAPSE? Each absence beyond 4 absences=a Lapse. Each lateness beyond 4 latenesses=a Lapse. Each missed or inadequate assignment beyond 3 such assignments=a Lapse. An assignment that involves a quiz—either from the book or on line—is inadequate if you get less than 70%, so please do the assignments carefully. The best way to avoid a lapse is to avoid doing things last minute.

You will be sending me most assignments via email and also bringing hard copies to class either for me alone or for people in your group also. If you are absent and an assignment is due, email the assignment to all concerned.

DO NOT USE ATTACHMENTS EXCEPT FOR THE FIRST, UNGRADED ESSAY AND FOR THE THREE GRADED ASSIGNMENTS, WHICH I WILL CORRECT ON LINE. YOU'LL SEND EVERYTHING ELSE AS EMAILS.

ABSENCES: I do not distinguish between excused and unexcused absences because that distinction creates haggling and sometimes dishonesty. In addition, any absence detracts from what you can learn in a course like this or what you can help your groupmates learn.

WRITING CENTER: If you want additional help with your writing, try the Writing Center in Norlin Library: <http://www.colorado.edu/pwr/writingcenter.html>.

DISABILITIES: If you qualify for accommodations because of a disability, please submit to me a letter from Disability Services in a timely manner so that your needs may be addressed. Disability Services determines accommodations based on documented disabilities (303-492-8671, Willard 322, www.colorado.edu/disabilityservices).

RELIGIOUS OBSERVANCES: Campus policy regarding religious observances requires that faculty make every effort to deal reasonably and fairly with students who, because of religious obligations, have conflicts with scheduled exams, assignments, or required attendance. In this class, I ask that you contact me at least one week ahead of the date(s) that you will be absent so that we can discuss ways to accommodate you.

CLASSROOM BEHAVIOR: Both students and faculty have to maintain an appropriate learning environment. I will do my part, and I expect you to be polite and helpful. See the university's policies at <http://www.colorado.edu/policies/classbehavior.html> and at <http://www.colorado.edu/studentaffairs/judicialaffairs/code.html>.

DISCRIMINATION AND HARASSMENT: The University of Colorado has policies on discrimination and harassment that you can access at <http://www.colorado.edu/odh/>. If you feel that you have been discriminated against or harassed, please call the Office of Discrimination and Harassment (ODH) at 303-492- 2127 or the Office of Judicial Affairs at 303-492-5550.

THE HONOR CODE: All students of the University of Colorado at Boulder are responsible for knowing and adhering to the university's policy of academic integrity, which can be found at <http://www.colorado.edu/policies/honor.html> and at <http://www.colorado.edu/academics/honorcode/>. All incidents of academic misconduct should be reported to the Honor Code Council (honor@colorado.edu; 303-725-2273).

Any student who misses two classes in the first week cannot pass the course.

Monday, August 23, first day of class: Talk about the syllabus and divide the class into three groups the members of which will work together throughout the semester. One way to determine these groups is to see who is interested in what research project. Members of a group will do the same project, share research, and critique each other's work. Here are the possible topics, along with both required and optional texts.

🤖 Think about the so-called "free market" and consider the following questions as you decide what to write about: Is there such a thing as a "free market"? How has it

functioned? How has the idea of the free market been used rhetorically? What are the differences, in other words, between idea and reality?

- Read Ha-Joon Chang, *Bad Samaritans: The Myth of Free Trade and the Secret History of Capitalism* and its critiques at http://www.cepr.net/documents/publications/FT_HaJoon.pdf. Then choose one or more books from the following list, plus any other books and articles you want to use.

- Barry Ritholtz, *Bailout Nation: How Greed and Easy Money Corrupted Wall Street and Shook the World Economy*.

- Robert Reich, *Supercapitalism* (which claims that capitalism has changed radically since the 1980s).

- Matt Miller, *The Tyranny of Dead Ideas*.

- For a libertarian perspective, check out one or more of Ron Paul's books (as you may remember, Ron Paul ran for president in 2008).

- For a conservative perspective see the essay "State Capitalism Comes of Age: The End of the Free Market?" on the course website; also browse through issues of *The National Review*—a journal founded by William F. Buckley to promote conservative ideas.

- For a more extreme perspective, check out Grover Norquist's *Leave Us Alone: Getting the Government's Hands Off Our Money, Our Guns, Our Lives*.

- For the most radical critique of free market ideology, check out Naomi Klein's *The Shock Doctrine*.

🗣️ Is religion "the opium of the people," as Marx said, or "an infantile neurosis," as Freud said, or something that transcends these limiting definitions? And what about the relation between religious ideas and organized religion?

- Rent Eli Cohen's movie *The Quarrel* and watch it together. Also read Christopher Hitchens, *God is Not Great: How Religion Poisons Everything*. Then choose one or more books and/or articles from the following list, plus any other books and articles you want to use.

- Andrew Newberg and Mark Waldman, *How God Changes Your Brain*.

- *An article on the same topic accessed at <http://www.newscientist.com/article/dn7147>.)

- Noah Feldman, *Divided by God: America's Church-State Problem*.

- John Micklethwait and Adrian Woolridge, *God is Back*.

- William Dobbell, *Losing My Religion*.

🗣️ What should be done about American education?

- Read Diane Ravitch, *The Death and Life of the Great American School System*, which also, at the beginning of Chapter 11, mentions other recent books on culture and education. You may choose to read one of more of those books or books and articles from the following list:

- Jonathan Kozol, *The Shame of the Nation: The Restoration of Apartheid Schooling in America*

- The Wikipedia article on the crisis experienced by the Portland, Oregon educational system: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oregon_tax_revolt.

- Jay Matthews, *Work Hard, Be Nice*.

- John Taylor Gatto, *Weapons of Mass Instruction*.
- Charles Murray, *Real Education: Four Simple Truths for Bringing Schools Back to Reality*.

- Richard Nisbett, *Intelligence and How to Get It*.
(Murray and Nisbett take opposite positions on IQ that have great implications for educational reform).

- Elizabeth Green, "Can Good Teaching Be Learned?" *New York Times Magazine*, March 7, 2010: <http://www.nytimes.com/2010/03/07/magazine/07Teachers-t.html>

- Ta-Nehisi Coates, "The Littlest Schoolhouse," *The Atlantic July/August 2010*: <http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2010/07/the-littlest-schoolhouse/8132/#>

- Chapter 5 of Matt Miller's *The Tyranny of Dead Ideas*, which debunks the idea that control of schools should be local; and chapter 9 of Malcom Gladwell's *Outliers*, which debunks the idea that a bad school or lower ability is responsible for the "achievement" gap between disadvantaged kids and kids from a more privileged background.

In reading these and other books, it's always a good idea to read their reviews. Do everything you can to avoid taking a position that is comfortable for you and then refusing to consider opposing ideas. Take those ideas seriously, articulate them clearly and fairly, and either concede something to them or refute them in elaborating your own position. I cannot take any paper seriously that does not take opposing ideas seriously.

ALTHOUGH THIS RESEARCH ASSIGNMENT OCCURS AT THE END OF THE COURSE, YOU WILL BE WRITING A MUCH SHORTER ESSAY ON A LIMITED ASPECT OF YOUR TOPIC FOR MONDAY, OCTOBER 4. PLEASE LOOK AT THAT DATE AND ADJUST YOUR READING AND OTHER PREPARATIONS ACCORDINGLY.

For Wednesday, August 25, read chapters 1-2 and 4-5 of *Knowing Words* and Section 2 ("Drafting") of *Rules for Writers*. Do exercises 2-1 and 2-2, "Thesis statements" and "introductions," on the book's companion website: dianahacker.com/rules. **Do not forget to enter the instructor's email address (bassoff@colorado.edu) before attempting the quiz.** I automatically receive the results of on-line quizzes.

Each of the following thesis statements is faulty. Tell me why in each case. [WHEN I SAY "TELL ME," ALWAYS ASSUME THAT I MEAN TYPE WHAT IS ASKED OF YOU IN 12 POINT FONT, DOUBLE SPACED, USING ONLY ONE SIDE OF A SHEET. I WILL NOT ACCEPT HANDWRITTEN ASSIGNMENTS]

- Toni Morrison won the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1993.
- Diets are dangerous.
- Televised sports are different from live sports.
- Seat belts can save lives, but carmakers now install air bags.
- Educators' motives for using the internet vary widely.

Also read the following paragraph by the Denver Broncos new head coach, who is responding to the question of whether some of the players he inherited from Mike Shanahan could function better in his system the following year.

Absolutely. I'm disappointed that we couldn't do more in terms of using Eddie Royal, and I've been asked that question a bunch and I know Eddie's frustrated with it, too. So, I'm not happy with that and I don't want that to be the case.

That's not stereotypical of Eddie this year, and we're going to work hard to fix that and get that to change dramatically going into next season.

How clear and effective is this statement? If there are problems, how would you change them? Email me all the exercises except the ones in Hacker, which I can see on-line. In the "re" line put "Assignment for August 25." Use this same format—changing the date, of course—for all emailed assignments.

For class: Bring *Knowing Words, Rules for Writers*, and hard copies of your exercises to class. Remember to send non-graded assignments as emails, not as attachments.

For Friday, August 27, read section 46 of *Rules for Writers* and sections 37b and 59 of the same book; and the section "Quoting, Paraphrasing, Summarizing" on the course web site.

Summary writing—or precis writing, as it is sometimes called—is a challenging exercise. Quite apart from its relevance to research projects, it helps you think and write more efficiently.

As practice, summarize the following paragraph in one well-constructed sentence.

The half-century campaign to eradicate any vestige of religion from public life has run its course. The backlash from a nation fed up with the A.C.L.U. kicking crèches out of municipal Christmas displays has created a new balance. State-supported universities may subsidize the activities of student religious groups. Monuments inscribed with the Ten Commandments are permitted on government grounds. The Federal Government is engaged in a major antipoverty initiative that gives money to churches. Religion is back out of the closet.

—Charles Krauthammer, "Let's Have No More Monkey Trials"

For the following paragraph, written by a biologist and ecologist, write two summaries: the first just one sentence, like the one you did for Krauthammer; the second a more extended summary of main ideas, leaving out the details:

In 1938, in a series of now-classic experiments, exposure to synthetic dyes derived from coal and belonging to a class of chemicals called aromatic amines was shown to cause bladder cancer in dogs. These results helped explain why bladder cancers had become so prevalent among dyestuffs workers. With the invention of mauve in 1854, synthetic dyes began replacing natural plant-based dyes in the coloring of cloth and leather. By the beginning of the twentieth century, bladder cancer rates among this group of workers had skyrocketed, and the dog experiments helped unravel this mystery. The international Labor Organization did not wait for the results of these animal tests, however, and in 1921 declared certain aromatic amines to be human carcinogens. Decades later,

the dog experiments provided a lead in understanding why tire-industry workers, as well as machinists and metalworkers, also began falling victim to bladder cancer: aromatic amines had been added to rubbers and cutting oils to serve as accelerants and antirust agents.

–Sandra Steingraber, “Pesticides, Animals, and Humans”

Now paraphrase Barbara Ehrenreich’s argument that the breast cancer support movement has evolved into “a full-fledged religion. The products—teddy bears, pink ribbon brooches, and so forth—serve as amulets and talismans, comforting the sufferer and providing visible evidence of faith.” In doing this, try to capture the essence of Ehrenreich’s statement without using key phrases such as “full-fledged religion,” “amulets and talismans,” “comforting the sufferer,” and “evidence of faith.” This is a difficult but crucial assignment because the skills you are learning are essential to incorporating other people’s ideas into your own writing.

Also tell me the distinction between “continuously” and “continually.”

Email me your assignment but also bring hard copies to class for both me and your groupmates. Look back at the assignment for August 25 for the way I want you to do emails.

In class: After handing in your hard copies, divide into groups and distribute hard copies to your groupmates. We will go over the work together.